

VZCZCXRO6287
OO RUEHQU
DE RUEHPU #0512/01 1491739
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 291739Z MAY 09 ZDK
FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9966
INFO RUEHZH/HAITI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 2320
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO PRIORITY 0386
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA PRIORITY 2049
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM J2 MIAMI FL PRIORITY
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 1877

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PORT AU PRINCE 000512

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR WHA/EX, WHA/CAR, S/CRS, DS/IP/WHA, AND INR/IAA
WHA/EX PLEASE PASS TO USOAS, USAID/LAC
SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/22/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [ASEC](#) [HA](#)

SUBJECT: HAITI: FISSURES IN ARISTIDE'S LAVALAS PARTY LIKELY
TO PERSIST

REF: PORT AU PRINCE 122

Classified By: Amb. Janet A. Sanderson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

1. (C) Summary: Two dueling factions of Jean-Bertrand Aristide's Fanmi Lavalas party are pushing competing plans to reform the FL charter as they jockey for a claim to leadership of the party in advance of the late 2010 presidential elections. Neither group looks likely to win over the other side, although the hardliners appear more dominant, with stronger ties to the party's grass roots. Party moderates rejected a recent reconciliation attempt initiated by Aristide's self-styled ''spokeswoman.'' The moderates, led by Yvon Neptune and Yves Cristalin, appear to be seeking a rapprochement with President Rene Preval, while Aristide loyalists have only sharpened their rhetorical attacks against Preval in recent months. Moderates are eagerly seeking confirmation of rumors that the U.S. law enforcement is gathering evidence linking Aristide to drug trafficking and other crimes, in the hope that such information will help them discredit the former President. Senator Rudy Heriveaux, the leading FL Senator, who has made overtures to both sides in recent months, remains isolated from both groups. Leading FL hardliner Maryse Narcisse claims the party's election boycott caused the low turnout for the April 19 Senate elections, but claimed the party had nothing to do with threatening leaflets attributed to Lavalas militants meant to intimidate voters in the days preceding the elections. She refused to entertain the idea that Aristide was at best ambivalent about his party's participation in elections as long as he is outside the country. End summary.

LAVALAS MODERATES HOPE TO REVISE PARTY CHARTER

2. (C) Former PM Yvon Neptune told PolCouns April 24 that he was skeptical that opposing factions of the Fanmi Lavalas (FL) party could reconcile their differences. Ambiguities in the party's current charter, together with the absence of FL ''National Representative'' Jean-Bertrand Aristide from Haiti, would pose insurmountable obstacles to reforming the party in a way that brought together militants on both sides of the divide. Neptune pointed to Aristide's well-known reluctance to yield the smallest amount of autonomy to leaders in Haiti, as demonstrated by his unwillingness to publicly support the Executive Committee's slate of candidates for the April senatorial elections. He said tensions within the party had recently escalated, citing a

recent edition of a local newspaper that branded him a
'traitor' on the front page.

13. (C) Despite his mentor's skepticism, former Chamber of Deputies President Yves Cristalin is tentatively moving forward with his plans to build support for a revision of the FL charter. (Note: Cristalin, a leader of the ad hoc 'Team Responsible for the Interim Management of Lavalas Affairs,' is the principal organizer of the moderate faction of Lavalas. Neptune guides the moderates but keeps a statesmanlike distance from their day-to-day affairs. End note.) Cristalin told PolCouns April 24 that he was organizing a national conference of Lavalas militants with the aim of preparing a new charter, one more internally democratic and not bound by Aristide's whims. Cristalin deflected a question about how or whether he intended to reach out to opposing factions of the party, acknowledging the difficulty of reconciling with Aristide loyalists but expressing a vague confidence that a solution was possible. Deputy Jonas Coffy, a leading ally of Neptune and Cristalin, told Poloff May 22 that no date has been set for the conference because they lack financial resources. Coffy and his allies estimate it would cost USD 30,000 to assemble 500 activists at a Port-au-Prince hotel, but have only found 4,000 USD in funding to date.

14. (C) In a meeting with the Ambassador May 22, former PM Neptune remained mostly above the disputes currently embroiling the Fanmi Lavalas party, focusing instead on the failure of successive governments to educate the Haitian people, democratize access to health care, and enforce the

PORT AU PR 00000512 002 OF 003

rule of law. The primary problem was not a faulty constitution or inadequate laws but Haiti's current leadership, which failed to build institutions foreseen in the constitution or apply the laws as they are written. Neptune alluded to his efforts to distance his party from former President Aristide, noting rumors he said were circulating that a U.S.-based investigation was closing in on Aristide. Any evidence implicating the former President in corruption or drug trafficking, he implied, would strengthen the moderates and help Fanmi Lavalas definitively break with its nominal leader.

LEADING MODERATE LOOKS FOR ACCOMMODATION WITH PREVAL

15. (C) Cristalin's project to reform the Lavalas charter, however, is not the only iron he has in the fire. A member of President Rene Preval's Constitutional Reform Commission and a frequent guest at the National Palace, Cristalin appears to be pursuing an entente with Preval and his allies. Lavalas's exclusion from the April elections (reftel) was a 'political problem that requires a political solution,' Cristalin told Anes Lubin and Poloff at a reception May 8. (Note: Lubin, as a member of the Lespwa coalition's Executive Board, is an influential leader of the coalition that brought Preval to power in 2006.) Although Lavalas Senators and their allies are threatening to block the seating of newly elected Senators, Cristalin and Neptune were optimistic that Preval would reach an understanding with the Senators in question, including two from the Lavalas party. Neptune said April 24 that 'Preval knows how to resolve the situation,' later adding that 'sometimes (Preval) makes an offer you can't refuse.' Privately, Neptune told the Ambassador May 22 he recently had a cordial two-hour meeting with Preval, their first contact in years.

HARDLINERS DESCRIBE FAILED RECONCILIATION ATTEMPT

16. (C) FL Executive Committee 'Coordinator' and prominent hardliner Maryse Narcisse asserted to PolCouns May 4 that low turnout in partial senatorial elections in April was largely due to the exclusion of Lavalas candidates from the race.

Lavalas leadership 'choose the legal path' in responding to the electoral authority's decision, Narcisse said, and was not responsible for threatening leaflets that appeared in Port-au-Prince the week before first round of the elections April 19. Narcisse, accompanied by FL Executive Board Member Lionel Etienne and Communications Director Renan Armstrong Charlot, put the blame for Lavalas' exclusion squarely on the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP). Narcisse rejected Polcouns' suggestions that Aristide's refusal to explicitly endorse the FL slate showed that he was at best ambivalent about his party's participation in elections, as long as he was outside the country. Although Aristide had not endorsed her slate of Senate candidates in writing as the CEP demanded, she said, he had communicated his approval of the list privately 'through diplomatic channels' to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon. Besides, she said, she held a delegation of authority signed by Aristide in 2004 that gave her the right to act on his behalf. (Note: Although Aristide may have told Narcisse that he somehow intervened on her behalf, we have no evidence that he actually did so. The 'mandate' Narcisse described features a dubious, grainy facsimile of Aristide's signature on otherwise sharp text. Narcisse demurred when the Canadian Ambassador expressed his doubts about the mandate's authenticity during a private conversation in early April. End note.)

17. (C) Narcisse admitted that the FL Executive Committee was not constituted exactly as the Lavalas charter foresaw, but still defended it as the legitimate expression of Aristide's will that she oversee the party in his absence. (Note: The Executive Committee, the party's governing body, is supposed to be selected via a series of indirect elections held by the party's regional councils. End note.) She claimed to have attempted in early 2009 to bring former PM Neptune and his allies into an expanded Executive Committee, but she said the moderates had taken this overture as a sign of weakness, and it came to naught. While Narcisse seemed to hold open the

PORT AU PR 00000512 003 OF 003

possibility of compromise with FL moderates such as Neptune and Cristalin, she dismissed Senator Rudy Heriveaux as in no way authorized to speak for or lead FL. Narcisse claimed that the electoral authority had offered to accept the Lavalas Senate slate if Narcisse and Heriveaux jointly endorsed the party list, but she had refused to sign, because to do so would have implied recognition of Heriveaux as a Lavalas representative. (Note: Heriveaux registered the Lavalas candidates for the 2006 legislative elections, and the CEP sometimes addresses him as the party's representative. He initially supported Narcisse's registration of the party for the April elections but subsequently backed a revised slate consisting of most, but not all, of her preferred candidates. End note.)

FL 'COORDINATOR' LOOKS TO 2011 PRESIDENTIAL RACE

18. (C) Although Narcisse's reconciliation efforts appear to have gone nowhere, she said the party was pushing ahead with several initiatives to strengthen the party in advance of the presidential elections due in late 2010. The party would definitely field a candidate for the presidency, she said, but she would not identify possible names. In the meantime, the party was making tentative preparations for another national congress (the last was held in 2003) and designing a training program for Lavalas members. Narcisse lamented that NGOs and international organizations hesitated to give senior Lavalas officials jobs, even in non-political sectors such as health, a possible hint that her wing of the party is experiencing financial difficulties.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE: MARYSE NARCISSE

19. (C) Maryse Narcisse, 'Coordinator' of the FL Executive Committee and self-described spokeswoman of Jean-Bertrand

Aristide, was formerly Aristide's private secretary. She told Polcouns she has recently visited Aristide in South Africa. A late-2008 MINUSTAH report says she claimed to have made four such trips since 2004. Narcisse was kidnapped and held for a week in late 2007, an act she implied at this meeting was somehow directed by the National Palace. Her kidnappers, she said, acted very professionally, and drove late-model vehicles that she said were of the same type used by officials in the Palace. A doctor by training, she was once the Director General of the Ministry of Health and also was assigned to Haiti's Mission to the United Nations, according to Lavalas's website. Narcisse lived in New York for an unknown period of time and is probably a U.S. legal permanent resident. She speaks English but prefers French.

COMMENT

110. (C) Lavalas's two largest factions look unlikely to resolve their differences anytime soon. This was the first indication Embassy has seen that Fanmi Lavalas hardliners are planning a party convention this year or next that would revise the party charter. In any case, the hardline branch of the party appears to be in closer touch with the party's often radical grass roots. The two groups' public infighting redounds to the benefit of President Preval, who has seen his once formidable opponents squander their energy and credibility on internal disputes. Conventional wisdom holds that both factions will pursue the presidency in elections that should be held in late 2010. For the moment, however, neither faction looks in any shape to mount a serious challenge to their likely mainstream opponents.

SANDERSON